Australian Government

Department of Education, Science and Training

What Works. The Work Program

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

The Guidebook

SECOND EDITION

www.whatworks.edu.au

This Guidebook is one element of **What Works. The Work Program**.

It will work best if you have access to the other elements

- digital materials contained on the CD-ROM in this book, and on the website www.whatworks.edu.au, and
- The Workbook.

What Works. The Work Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.

What Works.
The Work Program

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Credits can be found on page 30

What Works. The Work Program. Improving outcomes for Indigenous students. The Guidebook. 2nd edition.

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Published by National Curriculum Services and the Australian Curriculum Studies Association

September 2005

ISBN 1-875864-45-8

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Design: Angel Ink Pty Ltd, Canberra

Print: Penfold Buscombe Qld

Contents

Welcome 1

The background 2
- Where has it come from? 3
- What is it for? 3
- Who is it for? 3
- What's in this booklet? 4

The national effort 5
- The facts 5
- Commitments to action 6
- The goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 10

A framework for action 12
- The IESIP Strategic Results Projects 12
  - What were they? 12
  - What were the results? 13
  - The central messages 14
- Key strategies for improvement 14
  - The problems 14
  - The solutions 16
    - Cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support 17
    - The development of skills 18
    - Participation 19

The ideas behind the nature of these materials 21
- The structure 21
  - Building awareness 21
  - Forming partnerships 22
  - Working systematically 22
- The case studies 23

Using the materials 24
- Using the materials as a whole 24
- Using the digital materials 25
  - How to use them 26
  - Making the site work for you 26
  - The Le@rning Federation's digital learning objects 28

Credits 30

Reconciliation of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia is not a moment or a single event. It requires a larger change in attitudes and practices.

Education, in its broadest sense, is the primary way in which this will be achieved.

Formal education and training will play a crucial role. We all have responsibilities to help ensure this process is successful.

The fundamentals

If outcomes for Indigenous students are to be improved

- *they must be given respect*

Self respect and respect from others is more basic to learning than any other factor. The high incidence of terms like 'self esteem', 'self-confidence' and 'pride' in successful work on improving outcomes for Indigenous students is no accident. They are starting points for becoming an effective learner — more fundamental than literacy and numeracy skills — and there is much ground to be made up here.

- *their cultures and the relevant implications of those cultures must be respected*

Cultural dispossession is a terrible thing. It can reduce people to shadows, a state of near invisibility. In the situation of Indigenous students, the case is clear. Aspects of their cultures must be recognised, supported and integrated in the processes of education, not just for their own success, but for the general quality of Australian preschools and schools.

- *they must be taught well*

Reports of successful practice could be read as lengthy descriptions of good teaching practice; not especially exceptional, but applied with commitment and a determination to achieve success for all involved. Good relationships, trust, flexibility, individual concern and problem-solving, perseverance, thoughtful observation and careful investigation of 'best' teaching strategies and possibilities, knowledge of students' backgrounds: that is what good teaching is. This is what teachers can do.

- *and they must participate consistently.*

As evidence has demonstrated so emphatically, the business of improving outcomes is a shared task. Regular attendance and consistent participation are key ingredients by which improved outcomes will be achieved. In some cases, additional support and encouragement from school personnel, from parents and carers and from other members of communities will be essential for this to occur.

The time for making improvement a reality is now.

Welcome

As a profession, teachers in this country have had great successes, achievements on a massive scale, of which we can be proud.

These achievements have provided near universal basic literacy. This wasn't always the case. A great leap forward occurred in the second half of the 19th century; and it was teachers who were responsible. Closer to the present and within the career lifetimes of many teachers working today, another giant stride occurred. In 1950 fewer than half of the Australian population had any secondary education. Today around 75 percent participate to the end of Year 12. The school curriculum has expanded, professional craft knowledge has grown and expectations risen to accommodate and provide for a vast new cohort of students. Teachers have been responsible.

But another step, just as challenging, is required. About 20 percent of the population miss out on the benefits that formal education provides. This matters to us all. It has been reliably suggested that more than 90 percent of students who fail to successfully complete Year 10 will be dependent on government welfare support for the rest of their lives — not good for them, and not good for the health and well being of our society.

Indigenous young people are significantly over-represented in this group.

The background

What Works. The Work Program is a set of materials for those working in schools — part of the national effort designed to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

It provides some information about that effort and, more importantly, provides advice and information about how improvement can be achieved and gives examples of contemporary cases where this is occurring.

It consists of three elements: this Guidebook, a set of digital materials and a Workbook. These are meant to be used together but each has its own function.

The Guidebook provides an overview of the materials and most of the key points. If you would rather stay clear of the digital world, it will get you started. However, it will also help you navigate and work with the digital materials and it repeats some of the material they contain.

The *digital materials* have been used to store and provide access to a larger body of resources, much of which has been drawn from case studies of successful practice. The CD-ROM will work where Internet access is problematic. The essential difference is that the content of the website is regularly expanded and updated and thus provides a larger and more contemporary repository of resources.

The Workbook is meant to be used as a workbook. It provides an outline for taking action along with some ideas and tools for doing so. A version of this can be found in the digital materials.

In short — **The Guidebook** for background, the **digital materials** for stories and examples, **The Workbook** for direction.

The second edition

This second edition of these materials has been revised according to suggestions made in the evaluations we have received from users of the first edition. The changes are not major, but if people are working from the first and second editions at the same time there may be differences in page numbering and so on.

One big difference is the inclusion of a sample of learning objects provided by The Le@rning Federation, a national body responsible for the development of on-line learning curriculum resources. The evaluation of these resources found that they were particularly helpful for increasing the motivation, engagement and learning of all students. We believe that these resources should be available especially for students most in need. As a result we have included a sample of this very large resource on both the website and the CD-ROM in this edition of the materials, and provided information about their use and where further resources might be accessed. **Please investigate these.** You may find them particularly useful for improving levels of numeracy and literacy and teaching scientific concepts.

Where has it come from?

At its inception **What Works. The Work Program** evolved from the research and other information derived from the Australian Government Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme's Strategic Results Projects (IESIP SRPs, see page 12). Since that time **What Works** has been developed in an on-going way with the support and collaboration of senior Indigenous Education administrators from across Australia and many other people involved with initiatives in the education of Indigenous young people. Those directly concerned are listed in the credits at the back of this book.

What is it for?

It is designed to help you as teachers and administrators to learn and, more importantly, to *take action* in your own settings.

We know that the most effective action takes place institution-wide in order that there is consistency evident in directions, practices and attitudes. But we also know that it is within the power of all individual teachers to make a difference to the lives of the students with whom they come into contact. Successful action which leads to improvement *on any scale* is a gain.

Who is it for?

People who work in Australia's education institutions.

Action doesn't always begin with the boss — the principal or team leader. But all the evidence suggests that effective action is eventually led and supported by the boss. So it is intended as a reference point and support for 'bosses' in education institutions across Australia.

But it is also, very specifically, for teachers. There are thousands of non-Indigenous teachers in Australia who have had little or no contact with Indigenous people. There are likely to be just as many who, when confronted by the task of teaching Indigenous students, are unsure where to start or how to seek support. There are others who have some experience but would like to do better. **What Works. The Work Program** is for all these groups.

Your school may not have Indigenous students enrolled. It is still important that your students develop an informed understanding of Australia's Indigenous peoples and their cultures, and of the importance of the reconciliation process. It is an education we all need. While this is not the direct focus of this package, you will still find interesting material here.

Indigenous students may be present, as they are in many hundreds of Australian schools, in small numbers. In cases like this, it is possible that these students and their needs can be squeezed out, lessening their chances of success. It is common that this 'just happens' in the busy-ness of school life and the wide range of matters which require attention rather than as a result of overt racism, although, unhappily racism still exists in some quarters and must be constantly challenged. Indigenous students should not be left to 'tough it out' on their own. They must be offered appropriate support and assistance to help them achieve as well as they can.

Your school may have a majority or a complete enrolment of Indigenous students, in which case there will be other issues to confront. They may be matters as disparate as access to continuing education, high and regular staff turnover, language or cultural issues. Some of the assumptions about schooling which non-Indigenous Australians treat as conventional are likely to be challenged.

In any of these cases, a job remains to be done — a job which is widely varied, challenging, long term and, in the final analysis, enriching for us all. It is not an option to consider after everything else is done. It is at the top of the list.

What Works. The Work Program contains information which we hope you find useful in pursuing that task.

What's in this booklet?

The next section provides some general background information. This may be well known to you and you will certainly have been sent some of the documents referred to. But it may also be useful for a quick reference source.

The third section (page 14) provides a framework for thinking about action. It is derived from a number of sources which have been consistently confirmed in successful experience, research and policy. The three pillars: cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support; the development of skills; and consistent and engaged participation.

The fourth section (page 21) provides some advice about using these materials, with particular attention to the use of the digital resources.

The national effort

Our people have the right to a good education. Our children need the skills, experiences and qualifications to be able to choose their futures. Our communities need young people coming through with the education and confidence to be effective leaders. We need young people who can be advocates for our people, able to take their place in Australian society and still keep their culture strong.

— The Department of Education, Science and Training Indigenous Education Ambassadors, a group of well known Indigenous Australians.

The facts

Over the past 30 years, despite some public perceptions to the contrary, Indigenous Australians have made a great deal of progress in education and training.

- Participation in early childhood and primary schooling has improved dramatically.
- Retention rates from Year 7/8 to Year 12 have shifted from under 10 percent in 1970 to nearly 40 percent in 2003.
- The very first Aboriginal tertiary students of Australian universities began graduating in the early 1960s. In 2003 there were just on 9000 Indigenous students enrolled in university courses.
- The participation rates of Indigenous 15–24 year olds in vocational education and training have actually reached levels about the same as those for other Australians.

However there is still a long way to go. On average, Indigenous Australians …

- are less likely to get a preschool education
- remain well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills development before they leave primary school
- have less access to secondary school in the communities in which they live
- tend to leave school much younger
- are about half as likely to go through to Year 12
- are far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programmes in vocational education and training institutions and universities
- obtain fewer and lower-level education qualifications.

'It is clear that more needs to be done to improve our people's educational opportunities. It is also clear we need to ensure that Indigenous Australian young people succeed in schooling and have the skills to enjoy a more secure economic, social and cultural future.'

— The Indigenous Education Ambassadors

Commitments to action

Ministers of Education

All State and Territory governments and the Australian Government work at a national level through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (otherwise known as MCEETYA). MCEETYA recognises that Australia's Indigenous people are 'the most educationally disadvantaged group in the community' and has undertaken a number of collaborative activities, particularly in the last decade, to address the educational needs of Australia's Indigenous people. These activities include implementing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (1989) which is included in this Guidebook.

At its meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA considered the Report of its Taskforce on Indigenous Education. The Taskforce identified a number of issues that are impeding the achievement of educational equality.

- There are lingering perceptions in some quarters of the Australian community that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students is 'normal' and that educational equality for Indigenous Australians is either not achievable, or if possible, only achievable over a long period of time (i.e. decades or generations).
- There is often a systemic lack of optimism and belief in educational success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Education of Indigenous students is often not regarded as an area of core business in education systems.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers are often denied access to facilities and services that other teachers and education workers take for granted and which are ensured by legislation.
- Initiatives that develop more effective models of education which build on, replicate and sustain progress in the achievement of equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous students often fail to be implemented systemically and/or at the local level.
- While there is a widespread acknowledgment of a close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure, mechanisms to address cross-portfolio issues for Indigenous students are lacking.

In March 2000, MCEETYA agreed to undertake a third phase of work to accelerate progress on these issues. This work includes the promotion and implementation of:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools, and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The statement and the model, together with the MCEETYA Taskforce report and discussion paper, have been published and circulated. If you do not have a copy, you can download one from: <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/pdf/reportm.pdf>.

At the May 2005 meeting of MCEETYA, a one-day forum was conducted specifically to look at strategies for improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The Ministers agreed to make improving the outcomes for Indigenous students the top priority for MCEETYA for the 2005–2008 quadrennium.

MCEETYA will establish a working party of senior officials, chaired by Western Australia, to develop mechanisms of closer collaboration, improved funding arrangements and effective programs to improve the outcomes for Indigenous students. The working party will consult with Indigenous communities and will consider early intervention programs, retention strategies, mentoring, teacher preparation strategies and local Indigenous community involvement.

Australian Government

Australian Government Whole-of-Government Approach (2005)

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to a 'National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians', recognising the need for services to take account of local circumstances and to be informed by consultations and negotiation with local representatives. The principles address:

- sharing responsibility
- harnessing the mainstream
- streamlining service delivery
- establishing transparency and accountability
- developing a learning framework, and
- focusing on priority areas.

COAG committed to Indigenous participation at all levels and a willingness to engage with representatives, adopting flexible approaches and providing adequate resources to support capacity at the local and regional levels.

Since 2003, the Australian Government has been working co-operatively with State and Territory governments and Indigenous communities, in a number of sites around Australia, to trial whole of government approaches to improving service delivery to Indigenous people.

The Department of Education, Science and Training (Australian Government) and the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW Government) are the lead agencies for the trial being undertaken in the Murdi Paaki region in the far west of NSW. These agencies in partnership with the new Murdi Paaki Regional assembly have been working to assist Indigenous people of the region to build governance skills, identify priorities through community planning, and implement shared responsibility agreements to take communities' priorities forward.

The other COAG trial sites and their Australian Government lead agency include:

- Wadeye, Northern Territory (Department of Family and Community Services)
- Cape York, Queensland (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations)
- Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands, South Australia (Department of Health and Ageing)
- Shepparton, Victoria (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations)
- East Kimberley, Western Australia (Department of Transport and Regional Services)
- Australian Capital Territory (Department of Environment and Heritage), and
- Northern Tasmania (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs).

Australian Government Indigenous Education Policy 2005–2008

On 5 April 2004, the Australian Government announced funding of $2.1 billion for Indigenous Education for 2005–2008, an increase of 20.5 percent over the previous quadrennium. Existing programmes have been reshaped to direct resources to initiatives that have demonstrably improved outcomes, to give greater weighting of resources towards Indigenous students of greatest disadvantage — those in remote areas, and to improve access to mainstream services, especially for those students in metropolitan areas. An important part of the new funding package is a strengthened performance framework, including the introduction of school attendance benchmarks.

Indigenous-specific funding provided by the Australian Government is supplementary to other mainstream funds and is intended for strategic interventions to accelerate Indigenous students' learning outcomes.

Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Programme (IESIP)

The Australian Government is providing $680.1 million over 2005–2008 under this programme.

IESIP Strategic Results Areas

Over $519.9 million is being provided to continue supplementary recurrent assistance to education providers for Indigenous students. Supplementary funding will continue to be paid on a per capita basis for Indigenous students in government and non-government education providers across the preschool, school and vocational education and training sectors in remote and non-remote areas.

IESIP Strategic Initiatives

$129.7 million will be provided for ongoing and new strategic initiatives and special projects to support and improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students, particularly Indigenous students in remote areas. The major initiatives for 2005–2008 include:

- *Dare to Lead* — making the difference
- the What Works project
- the Yachad Accelerated Learning Project, and
- the National Accelerated Literacy Project, supporting scaffolding literacy in the Northern Territory, the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools of Western Australia, the Catholic Education schools of Tjurabalan, Western Australia, and Shalom Christian College, Queensland.

Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) Programme

This programme is the major direct assistance programme that provides targeted funds directly to Indigenous students, to schools and to parent school partnerships and education institutions to improve education outcomes. Total funding for IEDA for 2005–2008 will be $289.5 million, an increase of $31.07 million, or 12 percent, over funding for 2001–2004.

IEDA has been significantly reshaped for 2005–2008 to accelerate improved outcomes for Indigenous students based on evidence of what works. Tuition assistance for Indigenous students is better targeted and whole of school approaches have been introduced from 2005. It provides the following.

- In-class tuition to more than 45,000 students. It is targeted at Indigenous students who do not meet Year 3, 5 and 7 national literacy or numeracy benchmarks but schools have some flexibility in the use of funds for tutoring Indigenous students between Years 1 and 9 not meeting the relevant literacy and numeracy curriculum outcomes levels for their age.
- Intensive tutorial support in the first year for students who must leave their remote community to attend school (a new policy proposal to commence in 2006).
- Tuition for Indigenous students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to improve retention rates and Year 12 outcomes is mostly delivered after school.
- Tuition for tertiary students through bulk funding arrangements with tertiary institutions to help improve Indigenous outcomes.
- Support for whole-of-school intervention strategies including Parent School Partnerships Initiatives which encourage Indigenous parents and communities to work with schools to tackle entrenched localised problems. The aim is to improve attendance, literacy and numeracy outcomes, retention and Year 12 completion rates.
- Continuation of homework centres to encourage Indigenous students to complete their homework and develop independent study skills.

Leaders of Principals' Associations

In June 2000, at a conference conducted by the Australian Principals' Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC), the four peak Australian Principals Associations made a series of commitments to generate and support efforts to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students. These commitments have recently been reaffirmed by each of the four Association's leader.

- The 'taking it on' phase of the *Dare to Lead* initiative has now been completed with nearly double the anticipated number of schools and organisations signing up for this most laudable effort. Now comes the 'making the difference' phase, the time when schools put into place programs that will improve the life success options of Indigenous students across Australia. The State and Territory school leader professional associations will play the vital role in coordinating the resources provided by the DEST through APAPDC which are aimed at assisting schools to utilise the resources being provided to teachers in performing their professional duties. There is perhaps no greater challenge facing Australian educators today than that of improving Indigenous outcomes across the nation, but it is a challenge that we, as Australians for Australians, must overcome. We have agreed to 'take it on'. Now it is time to 'make the difference'.

  — Ted Brierley: Chair APAPDC; President, Australian Secondary Principals Association

- The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is delighted that DEST has committed funding for Stage 3 of the *Dare to Lead* project. The fact that the sign up figure during Stage 2 has far exceeded expectations speaks volumes about everyone's commitment and passion to improve the learning outcomes of our Indigenous students.

  Signing an agreement though is the easy part and only the beginning of the journey. Making a genuine difference is the hard part and it is only by all of us working together that we will achieve this.

  APPA pledges its total commitment to the *Dare to Lead* project Stage 3. We accept the challenge to 'make the difference'.

  — Leonie Trimper: President, Australian Primary Principals Association

- Making a difference is what actually matters! Results are what we are judged by! The resources of DEST, the coordination, leadership and professional development of APAPDC and the willingness and work of those in schools is required for this great challenge. Galvanising local communities into action with quality leadership will lead to results. Let's 'make the difference'!

  — Malcolm Lamb: President, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

- The APCSSA remains fully committed to supporting the *Dare to Lead* initiative. Many Catholic schools around Australia have been established to meet the needs of communities with large numbers of Indigenous students. Not surprisingly, a significant number of Catholic schools have also joined the *Dare to Lead* coalition — a trend replicated across a variety of states and territories and across different education sectors. APCSSA continues to acknowledge the need to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students. To do so is in keeping with principles of justice, equity and reconciliation. I commend the work done by all involved in the initial phases of *Dare to Lead*. For many of us in school leadership the vital first step has been to 'take it on' and to join the coalition. The very real challenge remaining for us all is to 'make the difference' for our students as we continue to support the *Dare to Lead* project.

  — John Aldous: Chairperson, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools of Australia

The goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision-making

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.
2. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as education administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers' assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, and Indigenous languages.
3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
4. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and students' services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Indigenous people to participate in education decision-making.
6. To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Indigenous communities regarding education decisions at regional, State/Territory and national levels.

Equality of access to educational services

7. To ensure that Indigenous children of pre-primary age have access to preschool services on a basis comparable to those available to other Australian children of the same age.
8. To ensure that all Indigenous children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.
9. To ensure equitable access for Indigenous people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

Equity of educational participation

10. To achieve the participation of Indigenous children in preschool education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.
11. To achieve the participation of all Indigenous children in compulsory schooling.
12. To achieve the participation of Indigenous people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

Equitable and appropriate education outcomes

13. To provide adequate preparation of Indigenous children in preschool education for the schooling years ahead.
14. To enable Indigenous attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.
15. To enable Indigenous students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.
16. To enable Indigenous students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.
17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Indigenous languages.
18. To provide community education services which enable Indigenous people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.
19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Indigenous adults with limited or no education experience.
20. To enable Indigenous students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.
21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures.

Note: Elements of the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century* (1999) are also highly relevant. The 'Declaration' can be viewed or downloaded from <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/adelaide/index.htm>.

A framework for action

It is necessary to have a framework for thinking about and shaping action which might be effective for improving outcomes for Indigenous students. This section of the Guidebook is intended to provide a resource for that purpose.

There is a powerful consistency in views expressed over time through research, policy and practice about ways and means of doing better. (They appear, for example, in the goals of the relevant National Policy on the preceding pages.)

They have had varying emphases at different times and places. Work to combat racism is an example. The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in the curriculum is another, which evolved into the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across all areas of learning. Encouragement of participation in decision making has been a long-standing issue. *But these are means to an end, and that end is success in conventional terms for Indigenous students.*

The IESIP Strategic Results Projects

As noted, this project evolved from work conducted on the Australian Government IESIP Strategic Results Projects (SRPs). With many other sources, they have provided an evidence base for a framework for action.

The report about the SRPs, *What works? Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students* and its summary form *What has worked (and will again)* are in wide circulation. They can also be downloaded from the ACSA website at <http://www.acsainc.com.au/pages/atsiedpubs.php>

This short summary is included here for those who have not encountered them.

What were they?

In December 1997, the Australian Government launched a series of Strategic Results Projects (SRPs) related to education and training for Indigenous students.

Around $13 million was provided to State and Territory government and non-government preschool, school and VET sectors for a range of short (one year), sharply-focused initiatives related to literacy, numeracy, vocational education and other areas of education and training delivery.

Those submitting for projects were asked to address the question — *What changes to education and student support delivery practices will result in improved Indigenous student learning outcomes within a relatively short period of time?*

There were 83 SRPs, focusing on a wide range of topics (and, frequently, more than one) including:

- home to school transition
- transition from the primary to secondary years
- supporting students in the secondary years
- older students re-entering education and training
- student mobility

- building skills in early childhood education
- literacy in Standard Australian English
- Indigenous languages
- using information and communication technologies
- numeracy
- arts education
- vocational education and training (VET) in schools
- VET in colleges, and
- training in the justice system.

They ranged in scale from small single-site operations to large systemic initiatives. Thirty-one projects operated at more than one site (approximately 320 sites across Australia in total) ranging from inner urban areas of capital cities to remote outback areas. Approximately 3800 students were directly involved.

The work was not conducted in 'exceptional circumstances', meaning carefully controlled and favourable situations. It was carried out in 'normal' preschools, schools and training institutions, under conventional conditions.

The strategies adopted could not be generally described as innovative or unusual, although, in context, they may have been both. The results were achieved by people working more intensively with strategies that are widely familiar, that could be described as conventional good practice and that are readily portable to other similar contexts.

One of the initiative's distinctive features was that each project was required to set targets for achievement, and to establish baseline data from which results could be measured. Each project reported in these terms.

What were the results?

- The general objective of the SRPs was achieved. Providers of education and training did, in fact, 'demonstrate that improving Indigenous student learning outcomes can occur in a relatively short space of time through concerted efforts', across a very broad range of projects in varied locations and contexts.

At the time of writing the report final performance data were available for 60 of the projects. Forty-one of these (68 percent) achieved or exceeded their targets. Eleven (18 percent) either achieved or exceeded one or more of their targets but not the complete set, or achieved them at one or more sites but not at one or more other sites. Project work was continuing at six of these sites, with the expectation that further gains will be made.

Eight of the 60 projects (13 percent) did not achieve their contracted goals, but five of these achieved what they actually set out to do (e.g. the development of courses, programs or teaching materials).

- The results were achieved in areas closely aligned with national targets for Indigenous education. The major emphases were: improved attendance rates, improved grade progression and completion rates; improved rates of secondary completion and articulation to further study or training; participation and completion rates in vocational education and training; and acquisition of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English and numeracy.

Levels of achievement were evenly spread across these topics; that is, there were no particular areas of success or failure. Location factors appear to have had little impact on levels of project achievement, although there were a small number of cases reported where students at more remote sites in the same project did not achieve the same level of improvement as students at sites that were less remote.

- The project performance targets ranged in levels of ambition. The largest group, however, established benchmarks for improvement in performance or participation which were in line with local, state/territory or national rates for non-Indigenous students, reflecting the core goals of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.
- There were many project outcomes unrecorded by the formal performance indicators. They are very diverse, but their dominant theme was the evident growth in self-confidence and engagement among the students involved.

The central messages

- Through concerted effort, it is possible to significantly improve Indigenous student learning outcomes.
- The SRPs' results were achieved by people working more intensively with strategies that are widely familiar, could be described as conventional good practice, and are readily portable to other similar contexts.
- The things that did matter were clear targets and monitoring processes, adequate resources but, above all, a firm belief in the prospect of success and a will to make it occur.

Key strategies for improvement

Before turning to strategic solutions, it is important to acknowledge the nature of the problems Indigenous students have confronted in the past and might still be confronting in achieving success.

The problems

We know why Indigenous students don't succeed as well as other Australians in education. This list from an article by Dennis McInerney in the *Australian Journal of Education* outlines them clearly.

> … the comparatively recent introduction of English language, literacy and Western education to Aboriginal peoples; the pedagogic inexperience and cultural unpreparedness of teachers for working effectively in Aboriginal education; lack of continuity of education due to rapid teacher turnover in Aboriginal settings; low and irregular attendance of Aboriginal students; lack of parental understanding of and commitment to formal education; lack of role models in our community and in the media embodying positive education and career pathways for Aboriginal peoples; the downward spiralling cycle of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration; health problems tied to inadequate housing and economic circumstances; differences in learning styles; cultural resistance; entrenched prejudice impacting on all spheres of life and entrenched institutional racism; low expectations on the part of teachers and policy-makers in education and training (1991: 155).

There are obviously background contextual issues which need to be addressed. One author notes the difficulty of separating 'educational issues from problems of individual and community health, housing and sanitation, employment and economic independence, and the social and cultural alienation which pervade these [Aboriginal] communities' and suggests that they need to be tackled concurrently (Tomlinson, 1994).

There are two issues here which emerge consistently in discussions.

The first is generalising from the worst case and making that a universal proposition. It should be remembered that generalising and stereotyping are among the serious afflictions suffered by Indigenous peoples. It should also be remembered that, as the case studies in these materials illustrate, even in the most challenging of circumstances, some students **do** succeed.

In this light, Chris Sarra, as Principal at Cherbourg State School in Queensland, demonstrated that dramatic student outcomes could be achieved in a relatively short period of time through the implementation of some simple strategies. He began with consolidating a school vision around creating high expectations and valuing Indigenous staff and community members. Intensive work was undertaken in the school to establish a collective belief about what the school wanted for their students and what had to be done to achieve it. It was clearly identified that effective learning and teaching which embraced and reinforced their children's Indigenous cultural and social context was the foundation that would underpin the change required. The approach recognised the substantial impact that a teacher has on the development of a child's self-identity, confidence and self-esteem. Coupled with a new culture of high expectations, every opportunity was taken to build positive relationships with both parents and the local community. Once the new school vision was established, the other major challenge was to change the children's beliefs about what they could achieve,

> In our school it seemed that historically teachers were in the habit of accepting under-achievement as an 'Aboriginal thing'. This is dangerous and has to be addressed as it can clearly have the effect of children subscribing to the same negative perceptions of who they are' (*Young and Black and Deadly: Strategies for improving outcomes for Indigenous students ACE Practitioner*, Perspectives Paper no. 5, p. 7).

The second is that it is very easy to find reasons why something can't be done. One which crops up frequently is — no employment opportunities, so why go to school? And it is an issue, a real issue, but there are other important reasons for becoming educated besides getting a job.

Finding reasons why nothing can be done in education leaves all involved in a disposition of waiting — waiting for infrastructure to be put into place, waiting for employment to pick up, waiting for the right moment and the ideal circumstances when it will all come together, so that then we can move forward.

The information that can be drawn from these case studies and the SRPs' work suggests a different way of looking at the issue: *there is no panacea for improving outcomes for Indigenous students, but in circumstances that will never be ideal there are obvious opportunities for making significant incremental gains, right now*.

There is a third issue which has deeper implications and is less easily resolved. There are parts of the country where, at the least, the cultural orientation of communities does not sit comfortably with the nature and demands of conventional formal education. It is outside the range of this work to reflect on forms of education which might be derived explicitly from more traditional Indigenous cultures and that have outcomes which do not appear in the relevant official documents.

It might appear that the choice of whether or not to participate in mainstream education is illusory. It is legally required to certain ages, and even in remote communities it is an accepted, and in many cases well-enjoyed, part of growing up. It does provide access to employment and the material advantages that ensue, and it is a choice made by several hundreds of thousands of Indigenous Australians in all parts of the country. And yet the choice is also made not to participate, because school may be a site of failure and of constant battles with non-Indigenous authority.

The decision about what sort of education is right for their children must, finally, be left to Indigenous parents and communities.

The solutions

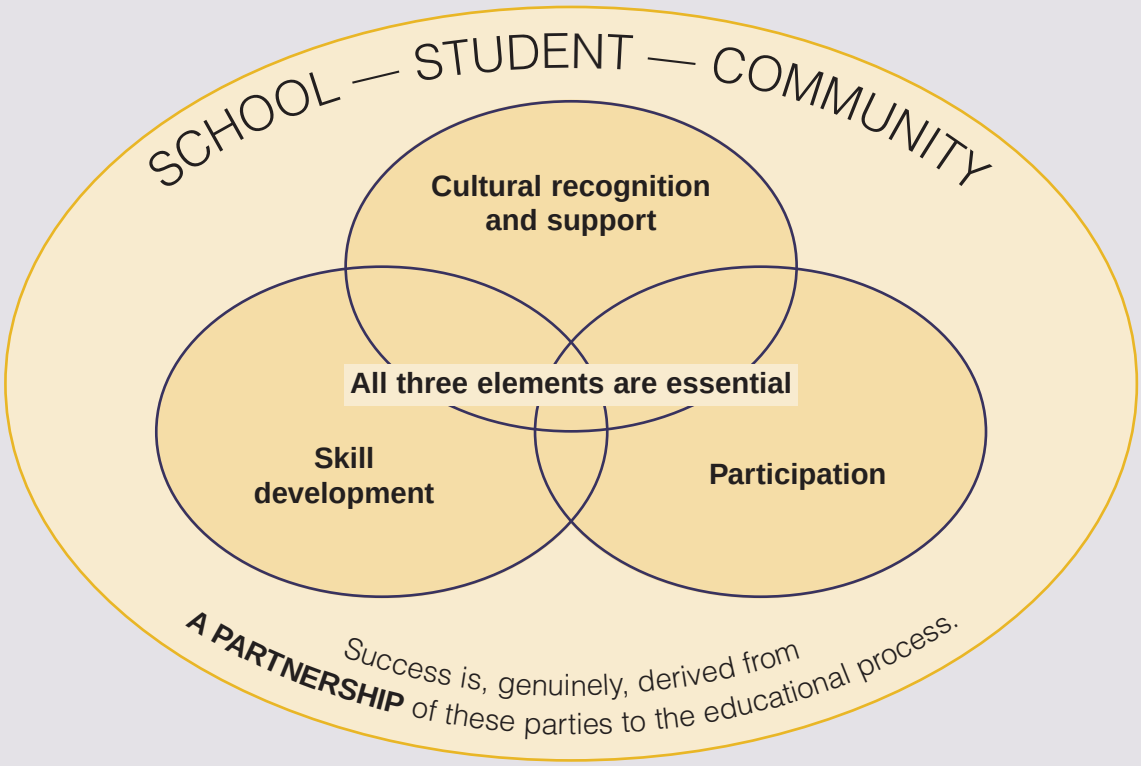
If students are going to succeed, the minimum requirements, reflected in national targets, are:

- skills which are fundamental to succeeding. In Australian schools these include literacy in Standard Australian English, and numeracy
- consistent attendance, which is frequently based on the sense of security, comfort and confidence they have in school environments
- consistent engagement, which is frequently based on realistic and meaningful challenge and a sense of capacity to rise to that challenge. This also means completion of required work.

If education is going to have a purpose which gives meaning to the effort required, it must provide accessible pathways to futures which are valued in further education, training or employment.

The three central avenues for action which recur are:

- cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support
- the development of requisite skills, and
- adequate levels of participation.



These three factors are not separable for two reasons.

First, *success is genuinely derived from a partnership of the parties to the educational process — student, family, community, institution*. Cultural support, recognition and acknowledgment can only be achieved by active and effective relationships between Indigenous communities and those who work in schools. Both parties have a role to play. The development of requisite skills will evolve from teachers' high expectations of students and the skill and, especially, the sensitivity with which they approach their work. Support, even in limited forms from home, will aid this process. Adequate levels of participation will only be achieved by active encouragement from home and the provision of a welcoming and accepting climate in the institution.

Second, *holistic approaches are essential*. The absence of any of these three components will seriously impair the likelihood of progress. For example, it will be fruitless to have an excellent literacy program if students are not attending school. Equally, if students are attending, quality programs are required for progress to be achieved.

Cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support

Respect for and understanding of Indigenous cultures are fundamental prerequisites for improving the levels of achievement of Indigenous students. *Success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved.*

Making institutions more 'culturally-friendly' in genuine and thorough-going terms is not just a matter of flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags although, who knows, that might be a starting point. It is a lived experience that has at least three central elements.

The establishment of good personal relationships and mutual trust

Racial harmony is hardly universal in this country, and relationships operate against a larger background of cultural misunderstandings, unmet promises and dispossession.

It can also be forgotten what a personal process education is for all concerned. Good communication, genuine negotiation and predictability and consistency are based on the quality of personal relationships. The significance to success of good *personal* relationships between institution and community personnel cannot be over-emphasised.

Flexibility

Where cultural values differ in significant ways, all parties involved need to be flexible. One of the major impediments to the educational success of Indigenous students is an unwillingness by school personnel to modify any arrangements — pedagogical, structural, organisational — on the basis that success must be achieved in precisely the same way, and by precisely the same means, as other students. There must be some room to move at the edges of this process. Minor modifications can make major differences.

Localisation

There are many different routes to the same goals; and contextual factors (personnel, place and history among them) count for a great deal.

The problems of delivery of Western-style formal education in remote communities have been widely discussed, and sometimes as though they reflect the realities across the board. But the vast majority of Australia's Indigenous people do not live in remote communities. They live in the towns and cities of the eastern seaboard and the south-west. More than half live in New South Wales and Queensland, most in urban settings (nearly 20 percent in Sydney and Brisbane alone). They come from different family groups and may or may not have strong traditional links with the area in which they live. They may be deeply urbanised with life styles which are very similar to those of non-Indigenous Australians. Educators and trainers must be clear about the wishes of *local* communities and soliciting advice and support which will be effective *in context*.

Attention to these three factors produces 'strong' forms of cultural inclusion.

The development of skills

Over the years a considerable amount of attention has been paid to ideas about learning styles which might be specific to Indigenous students. Some of those which are best-validated are mentioned below. However the general principles of good education seem to apply as widely to Indigenous students as they do to any others.

Good education

- assumes all learners can and will succeed
- makes its demands clearly known
- includes explanations of the purpose and value of what is being learnt and efforts to ensure that they have meaning for the student
- provides a series of well-structured steps relevant to the competence and background knowledge of students
- searches for strategies to which students will respond
- provides a maximum of explicit guidance and modelling
- provides opportunities for practice, and consistent useful feedback
- accommodates variations in pace, and pays special attention to the needs of students who don't get it first time, and
- includes a level of intensity and manageable challenge.

Focusing effort

Research and experience have consistently confirmed the centrality of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy to success in formal education — for all ages and across learning area boundaries.

Some of the biggest challenges come in contexts where few, if any, students have English as a first language and where there are few social or economic demands for its use. But a more common need is the requirement for code-switching to modify dialectal variations of English to make it more 'correct' in school terms. Success comes from acknowledging and accepting dialectal differences and teaching the variations in SAE explicitly. This is an essential alternative to describing students' everyday language use as 'bad' or 'incorrect'.

Content

There are many different ways of finding culturally relevant ways of teaching content and skills which are common across the country.

There is an increasing range of texts and courses which reflect Indigenous students' life experiences and aspirations, but it is always true that increasing the cultural relevance of curricula requires getting to know students and their cultures better, and being sensitive to their capacities and interests.

Teaching practice

Intensity: Smaller class sizes, work with small groups and individuals, and thoughtfully-constructed grouping practices that provided for re-entry to mainstream classes are likely to have a significant impact.

Achievable steps: High expectations of success need to be translated practically into achievable stages that are explicitly taught. Planning on an individual basis of what is to be achieved in terms of skills, and how, is another approach to the same end. Successful achievement of developmental steps should be noted, celebrated and, where relevant, accredited, promoting a sense of competence and mastery.

Working cooperatively: Working cooperatively (as opposed to individually) in conventional classroom situations is a factor which figures prominently in research related to preferred learning styles of Indigenous students.

Expanding the range of media through which learning occurs and increasing its level of 'practicality': Examples in the case studies range from taking, or being taken by, young children on bush trips to older adolescent students working on building sites. There is a strong indication that this is one of the significant issues in the value accorded to arts education and the use of information and communication technologies. This is the reason why we have included a sample of The Le@rning Federation's digital 'learning objects' in this package (CD-ROM and website).

The contribution of the presence and example of Indigenous teachers and other education workers to the development of students' skills must be noted. Where these 'school' skills are seen and reinforced as being valuable, they are far more likely to be regarded as such and more likely to be acquired.

Participation

Regular attendance is an ongoing issue, but there are three key points for focusing on issues to deal with participation:

- school preparation and entry
- the first few years of secondary school, and
- pathways to further education, training or employment from the middle years of secondary schooling.

Context has an important influence on these issues. While remote communities may have high levels of mobility among students, they also often report very high levels of attendance during the primary years in schools which can be defining points of community infrastructure. However, if young people wish to continue their education they are likely to need to seek it elsewhere. Access is the issue.

In rural areas and cities where Indigenous students are more likely to be a minority group, the central issue is departure during the secondary years. Several factors appear to be at work: the loss of the pastoral intimacy which is characteristic of primary schooling; skill levels stretched past coping and hence an ever growing record of academic failure; an increasing incidence of confrontations about behaviour; impatience with the passive nature of much schooling coupled with influence from peers who have already left school; encounters with more aggravated forms of racism; and a curriculum which becomes more abstract and less obviously relevant to the lives of students.

School entry

Where there is access to pre-schooling, the factors which appear to pay dividends are 'familiar faces, familiar activities': the presence of Indigenous staff or assistants; good communication with parents, coupled with opportunities for parent involvement in ways parents find useful and enjoyable; and well-established personal relationships and a climate which is 'culture-friendly'.

Attendance

There is a very strong correlation between students' achievement and attendance levels. Common sense also suggests that attendance is the first and fundamental requirement in achieving success in education. Little can or will happen without it.

Case management — or 'dedicated customised support' as it has been described — is one solution which has worked. This includes home visits and other forms of community liaison; an emphasis on personal contact with consistent follow-up where absence occurred; personal planning and goal-setting; some work-related studies and experiences; support with academic work; linkages (actual and/or electronic) with other Indigenous students in similar situations; and counselling and mediation where problems were occurring. The underlying theory relates to developing and supporting student motivation and developing in them a sense of what may be possible.

The use of alternative settings that, for a part of the week, become a 'home' for the students involved has also been used successfully.

Engagement

Attendance is a crucial matter; productive engagement when attending is as important.

The strategy of increasing the level of contact between Indigenous adults (not necessarily teachers) and young people in education settings has proven value. This has occurred through extensive use of mentoring, but also by reducing class sizes and/or providing intensive one-to-one or small group tutoring. The usefulness of information technology as a tool for fostering engagement has also been noted.

Other strategies used to try to rectify this problem have long been familiar.

- The establishment of closer and less formal personal relationships between teachers and students.
- The establishment of a more informal and less regimented climate.
- The provision of a larger role for students in negotiation of work.
- Teaching so that success can be regularly and obviously achieved.

It is clear that schools must get direction and help on these issues from respected members of Indigenous communities and from the influence of encouragement and support coming from those communities operating as a whole.

The ideas behind the nature of these materials

The design of these materials is based on a series of ideas about the features of effective education for Indigenous students, coupled with notions about how schools function and how the people who work in them might be helped to improve performance.

They are designed, not just for general interest or expanding professional knowledge, but for taking action.

The structure

In terms of *taking action* there are three main themes which, from all available evidence, appear to occur in this sequence.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships, and
- Working systematically.

All need to be in place.

Building awareness

The starting point is building awareness of the issues. This will not be appropriate in all cases. There may already be a high degree of consciousness present. But until there is, the foundation for effective work is not in place.

In the end, all education solutions are about people and their personal and professional attributes — and attitudes. This is a theme which recurs constantly.

Schools are very busy places with a multitude of demands coming from many different sources — the students, their carers, community groups, staff, institutional order and arrangements, administrators located outside the school and governments. These demands are sometimes in conflict; and even when they aren't, choices have to be made which are the responsibility of school personnel.

In this context priorities can be fluid and over-ridden by the demands of the moment. Longer term achievements rely on ideas and attitudes which are embedded in principals and managers, teachers and other working personnel. They will be the product of past experiences, a sense of what is right and what should be done and, in the end, a sense of possibility … and practicality.

In such circumstances what personal professional qualities are useful?

- A capacity and willingness to solve problems as they arise on a case-by-case basis.
- A high level of attention to the interpersonal aspects of student motivation.
- An ability to see past the idea or the process to the person, while still remaining focused on longer term goals.
- Energy and perseverance.
- A confident and firm belief in the value of what is being done.
- And, a determination to succeed — to 'find a way'.

These materials are founded in the belief that these are not rare qualities in Australia's teaching workforce.

Forming partnerships

Schools exist to serve their communities. This self-evident fact is recognised in the partnerships personnel working in them seek to make, sometimes with civic organisations, businesses or sporting and other special interest organisations, very frequently with the parents and carers of their students.

This happens everywhere, as a matter of course. Without the confidence of the community, difficulties will inevitably emerge.

In the case of education for Indigenous students this is particularly important.

Their parents and carers have often had experiences of schooling which have been negative and sometimes relatively brief. New ground is consistently being broken in education by young members of Indigenous families — a challenge in any circumstances. There are new habits to be acquired. Education institutions have their own types of arrangements and customary ways of doing things which might be taken for granted, but they **do** have to be learnt. Apparently conventional taken-for-granted things, like finding out where and how you get your lunch, what a locker is for, what bells mean, managing timetables, selecting subjects and planning courses of study have to be dealt with.

Indigenous students are most commonly in minorities, often quite small, in schools which means that it can be easy to overlook their particular needs. Non-Indigenous staff can sometimes take the view that 'they treat them the same as any other student', that is, any other non-Indigenous student. Sometimes, where the level of pastoral care and interest is high, that will work; and often it won't. There is no substitute for an informed understanding of students' backgrounds, in both the particular and broad senses.

It has been noted above that: success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved. Genuine partnerships are the way to resolve this issue.

Elsewhere in the materials, we note that this is the hard part of taking action. But it should also be noted that it can be the most rewarding and enriching for all concerned. It is an essential step.

The materials provide a wide range of ideas and examples for making partnerships a success.

Working systematically

The education of Indigenous students suffers from ad hoc and sporadic efforts which might work well for a while and then go off the boil. A teacher with a particular commitment and interest might leave. Funding might be withdrawn from a program. A policy might be squeezed off the list to be attended to.

What gets prioritised gets done. This means having in place a policy and a plan to implement that policy. Responsibilities need to be assigned, targets established, and progress towards their achievement monitored. Strategies need to be thought through and, professional development, where necessary, and resources provided.

We know this, and we know that such procedures work. The substantial quality of education in this country hinges on this knowledge.

The Workbook provides an outline for this process.

The case studies

Case studies have some things in common with travel guide books. They are subject to the perspectives of the sources of information and their writers; they are about what is, or was, happening at a point in time. They may be influenced by aspirations rather than realities. They can't possibly provide a global picture of a situation with all the factors in place and visible.

There are plenty of examples of case studies intended to inform and inspire educational practice and they may all suffer from those features. Schools, after all, are complex places, full of varying stories and subject to constant change.

But we are confident that at the time of writing the case studies in these materials represent solid information which has led to success for Indigenous students. We have used visits and interviews, formal documents and research, and in some cases artefacts of student work to try to build rich pictures which are still to the point and illustrate action other teachers and schools have taken.

These case studies are snapshots of particular places at particular times and some of them are a few years old now. People mentioned may have moved on or programs changed and, in at least one case, the featured school does not exist as a separate entity any more. The cases remain, however, as examples of successful practice and we hope others can learn from those experiences. Feedback from users of the materials suggests that this is happening.

To accommodate some of the difficulties mentioned above, education and other case studies are frequently 'anonymised'. So they come from 'Smithtown High' and 'Main Street Primary' with 'John' and 'Mary' telling the stories. For reasons of authenticity, and with the permission and collaboration of those involved, we have chosen otherwise. We would like you to appreciate that these are real people in real circumstances.

The sources for the case studies have been schools and other organisations involved in our own 'What Works' workshops, suggestions provided by people who administer Indigenous education and training in various parts of the country and the IESIP Strategic Results Projects sites.

For reasons of time, manageability and representativeness of context, we have been selective about those included. We have no doubt that there are many other schools which could provide valuable stories and, in fact, in adding a further 20 case studies to the website since its initial construction, that is just what we've found.

We initially grouped all the cases by major themes but since then, some of the new ones have been added to other parts of the digital materials. Because of their popularity with users of the materials and to make access to the cases easier, from July 2005 they will be able to be reached directly from the first page of the **What Works. The Work Program** website.

Finally, those who helped in providing the case studies are noted in the credits. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. We were never disappointed, and often thrilled to experience first hand the quality of endeavour and commitment as well as the sheer professional skill of this sample of Australia's teachers.

Using the materials

Using the materials as a whole

As mentioned, this **Guidebook** provides some background and explanatory information.

The **Workbook** is a 'stripped back' support for action. You can write in it, you can copy pages and use them. You can expand or revise the templates to make them suit your purposes. You can answer the questions, tick off the checklists and so on. It is not something for the shelves. It is meant to be carried round, referred to, shown and shared. We hope that it might become dog-eared and tattered — sure signs of use.

The **digital materials** are intended to provide ideas and examples. They also repeat some of the material contained in The Guidebook and contain a version of The Workbook.

The way you use them will depend on your circumstances. They are not designed to fit a series of step-by-step sessions, but they could be used that way.

Their use will begin by someone in a school taking them up and deciding that something can and has to be done. There will be a meeting, formal or informal, to discuss the issues they present. This will be a good time to turn to **The Workbook**. Someone or a group of people will scan the digital materials to see if they are going to be any use. They might bookmark particular parts to go back to or for others to look at.

Then it will be matter of getting formal, setting about thinking and planning together about what you are going to do. At this stage, work over the materials to see what will be of most use, note suitable sections and put them into a shape that works for you in your situation. Think in the medium term, say, over the course of a year. Don't expect results immediately. This is a steady process. Stability and sustained effort are just as important in learning processes as they are in taking action.

Once you've got a 'shape', you could build the materials into your professional development program as a whole staff activity, or use them for research and direction to support your work.

As you take action, they will remain as reference points for theory, practice and direction.

Using the digital materials

(the website **www.whatworks.edu.au** and the CD-ROM)

Following is a map of this site. It was constructed to encourage users to work through the material in a sequence. We still believe in the value of this approach. But to increase its value to experienced users, from July 2005 the case studies will be directly accessible from the first page of the website.

1. Our first priority

What's this site about?

– 'We are the Indigenous peoples of Australia'
– Background, Credits

2. A matter of urgency

Good news: 'The day the postie came…'

The facts … a long way to go

Commitment to action

3. Taking action

– Very important points

Building awareness

– A conversation about building awareness
– The 'Doors': stories of beginning points
– Analysing the issues: three tools for analysis
– Extending your knowledge: resources

Forming partnerships

– Knowing your students, their families and their communities
– Indigenous people on site
– Communities and networks for students
– Recognising and acknowledging students' cultures and heritage

Working systematically

– A sequence of steps and advice for working systematically (as in The Workbook)

4. Topics

Student Health	Improving outcomes in Literacy	Improving outcomes in Numeracy	The Early Years	The Middle Years	The Senior Years	Vocational Pathways
Case studies	*Case studies*	*Case studies*	*Case studies*	*Case studies*	*Case studies*	*Case studies*

The sources for the case studies have been schools and other organisations involved in our own 'What Works' workshops, the *Dare to Lead* project, suggestions provided by people who administer Indigenous education and training in various parts of the country and the IESIP Strategic Results Projects sites.

5. WW News

Sign up here to receive news by e-mail about *What Works. The Work Program* and its materials.

Both the website and the CD-ROM also include a sample of digital learning materials from The Le@rning Federation.

How to use them

We know that Australian teachers are comparatively computer-literate. But we don't know how people use digital materials for professional development purposes and we're not sure that anyone else does either. It is possible that it is a very individual process.

However, we **can** tell you how the materials are planned for use, and that is at least once in the sequence shown on the opposite page. This sequence appears to be important but we know that some users will already be a good distance along it.

But if you work through the materials as a whole they will provide a thorough perspective on what can be done, how some people are doing it and what you might do yourself.

Making the site work for you

To use the digital materials online you will, of course, need a computer with access to the Internet. If you are working from a CD-ROM, you will need a computer with a CD-ROM drive. Your monitor resolution should be 800 X 600 or better.

You don't need to be a computer expert. You just need to be familiar with basics such as how to use the mouse and how to navigate using Internet browsers.

System Requirements: Windows or Macintosh, Internet Explorer or Navigator, version 4 or better. In several places, the Macromedia Flash Player is required. It is available free to download from the link on the **What Works. The Work Program** website or Macromedia at:

<http://www.macromedia.com/>

The 'continue' and 'back' buttons

The 'continue' and 'back' buttons look like this:

The 'continue' button takes you through the materials according to the suggested sequence. If you don't see a 'continue' button you are viewing a page which (while it may be important) branches off from the suggested sequence. The 'back' button takes you back to the last page you viewed.

Hyperlinks

As you probably know, you move from one page of the site to another, through the use of hyperlinks. (The 'continue' and 'back' buttons are simple examples of hyperlinks.)

On this site, other hyperlinks looks like this: hyperlink

When you click your mouse on the hyperlink, it will take you to a new page. Sometimes, a small 'popup' screen will appear in front of the original page. These popup screens usually provide additional information at some point in the text. To close a popup screen, just click your mouse on the 'close' button, which looks like this:

Sometimes hyperlinks can take you outside this site, to other Internet sites. When you click your mouse on such a hyperlink, a new window will open on top of **What Works. The Work Program**. When you have finished looking at the 'new' site, just close its window. (Of course, if you are working from a CD-ROM and have no Internet access, then these sites will not be available to you.)

The site map

Most pages in the site provide access to a site map. If you want to go to a particular part of the materials, using the site map can be a quick way of getting there.

The search facility

The site provides a search facility, which can also be used at any time to help you find a particular part of the materials.

A further use, however, is to locate pages within the site which relate to a particular topic. If, for example, you search using the word 'literacy', the search will produce a list of documents related to that topic.

Using 'Bookmarks' or 'Favourites'

As you work with these materials, you might find that some pages are particularly important to you, in your setting. Or, if you are working through the suggested pathway, you probably won't be doing it all in one sitting. When you come back to the work, how will you get back to where you were?

In either of these cases, you can use the 'Bookmarks' or 'Favourites' functions in your browser to make a note of any page you want to remember. Then it will be simple to return to it when you want to. (This only works, of course, if you are coming back to the same computer! If you use a different computer you might need to use the site map or search facility to get back to the page you want.)

Printing pages from the site

At any time, you can use the 'print' button of your browser to print the page you are seeing on your screen. (You must, of course, be connected to a printer!)

The format of the result will vary according to a number of factors, including the particular browser you are using.

There are particular and obvious reasons, however, for wanting to print particular pages, such as planning documents and discussion papers. Many of these have been designed to allow you to download them to your computer. You can then save them and print them at your leisure or use them as you like in your work.

Pages such as these are available in 'pdf' (portable document format) or 'rtf' (rich text format) versions and buttons to get them look like this:

'pdf' documents open with software such as Adobe Acrobat which is available free to download from the link on the **What Works. The Work Program** site or the Adobe website at: <http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/main.html>

'rtf' documents can be opened with typical word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Word Perfect.

The advantage of both of these formats is that they allow you to produce a clean, formatted version of documents no matter what kind of computer or browser you are using.

Health and safety considerations

Finally, remember that whenever you are working on a computer it is good practice to make sure you are seated correctly, with the keyboard and monitor set at an appropriate height for you.

It is also important to take regular breaks away from the computer. Walking and stretching exercises are highly recommended.

The Le@rning Federation's digital learning objects

In this edition of the *What Works. The Work Program* materials a sample of The Le@rning Federation's (TLF) learning objects has been included on the CD-ROM and the website. We encourage you to explore their use.

TLF is an initiative of the governments of Australia, the Australian states and territories, and New Zealand. Its purpose is to develop high-quality interactive multimedia online curriculum content for all students up to Year 10. By 2006, TLF will have produced many hundreds of learning objects in six curriculum priority areas:

- Science — Years P–6, 9–10
- Mathematics and numeracy — Years P–9
- Literacy for students at risk — Years 5–9
- Studies of Australia — Years P–10
- Languages other than English: Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian
- Innovation, enterprise and creativity — Years P–10

Learning objects are small digital files containing 'chunks' of material, usually some mix of images, written text, audio, and animation, and interactive tools like calculators, notebooks and 'search' and 'point and select' tools. They can be easily run on normal computers. They vary in nature, but their purpose is to help teach some clearly-defined curriculum content/skills from the areas above.

They have recently been trialled in a range of school contexts, including schools with a high proportion of Indigenous students. The reaction from students and teachers has been very positive. Kids find them fun, engaging and interesting — even when the topics are fractions or place value. They like being able to work at their own pace; they like the colour, sound and animation; they like the interactivity and the constant feedback.

Teachers have found them to be of value for:

- motivating and engaging students
- encouraging persistence
- practising and reinforcing what has been taught in other ways
- scaffolding learning through a wider range of perceptual 'hand holds' on the material (e.g. some objects have sound which supports students with lower levels of literacy)
- diagnosing what students can and can't do, do and don't know
- expanding the range of learning options in the classroom, and
- providing modelling of things that can't be done in the classroom (e.g. science experiments).

At one of the trial schools where all students were Aboriginal, the Year 5/6 teacher using the objects said:

> *The kids all love them. They are very engaging. The use of computers in itself is a novelty in a way it might not be for many other kids. The visual element is very powerful, and it's more of a game rather than what they sometimes think of as learning. You can have too much of sitting down and working with paper and pens in a classroom. It helps to break that up, and to increase the range of learning activities. The kids value the independent way of working, and I never have to keep them on task when they are on the computers.*

Recent ABS data (2001, Catalogue 4713.0) indicate that while nearly 80 percent of Australian 10–14 year olds as a whole use computers at home, less than 30 percent of Indigenous 10–14 year olds do. This is most commonly a question of access and, in contemporary society, another dimension of disadvantage.

These objects provide a way of developing computer skills and practice while learning something useful academically at the same time.

How do you use them in class?

Obviously you need one or more computers on which the objects are installed and accessible. Have a play with the objects yourself for a start, and it will be surprising if you don't think immediately of some uses to which they can be put.

We have seen them used in computer labs, in libraries and in classroom pods.

We have seen them used as one element of a set of activity stations, as a stand alone activity or as one element of unit of work for a whole class, and as a major enhancement of distance education.

Where do you get more, and more information?

Only a sample of what is available has been included. We have chosen objects and other digital resources that are popular with teachers, that focus on foundation skills or that have an Indigenous cultural component.

There are lots more where they came from. Each state/territory school education sector has a Contact Liaison person for these materials who can be reached via the TLF's website.

Go to <www.thelearningfederation.edu.au/tlf2/> then to 'Collaborative networks' under 'About TLF'. Near the top of that page you will see 'Contact Liaison Officers'. Clicking that heading will give you a list of current contacts, including one for your sector. Clicking on the name will produce an e-mail contact.

Credits

The *What Works* project and materials are funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training as a flagship strategic project for Indigenous education 2005–2008. This project complements and supports the Dare to Lead project delivered by the APAPDC and also funded by the Australian Government.

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The case studies and related material were developed with considerable assistance from the following people. Please note that while people may have moved, locations are accurate for the period when assistance was provided. Some also sadly have passed away. Along with gratitude for their help and friendship, we would like to express our deep respect for their lives and broader contribution.

In the Australian Capital Territory

- Chris Harris (ACT Department of Education and Community Services)
- Trish Keller, Rosemarie Whitehead, Duncan Smith (Narrabundah PS)
- Frank van der Heide (Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn)
- Barry Woolacott, Marie-Ann Holdich, Pam Garrett, Bill Begg, Chereta Stephan-Daylight (Canberra College)
- Brian Gray, Wendy Cowey (University of Canberra)
- Michael Hall, Nick Harris and students (Lanyon High School)

In New South Wales

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- Robyn Williams, Wendy Williams, Cliff Foley (Tharawal Local Area Land Council, Picton)
- Jo-Anne Kelly-Kilpatrick, Ren Perkins, Kevin Naden, Fred Kelly, Ron Naden, Andrew Smith, Clive Ward (Djigay Centre, Kempsey Campus, North Coast Institute of TAFE)
- Gary Morris, Val March, Sara Bowden, Karren Graham (Booroongen Djugun College, Kempsey)
- Bernie Ingle, Suzanne Madden, Warwick Keen (New England Institute, TAFE NSW)

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- Al Yonovitz (Australian Hearing)

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- Rosemary Bell, Di Peachey (Brisbane Catholic Education Office)
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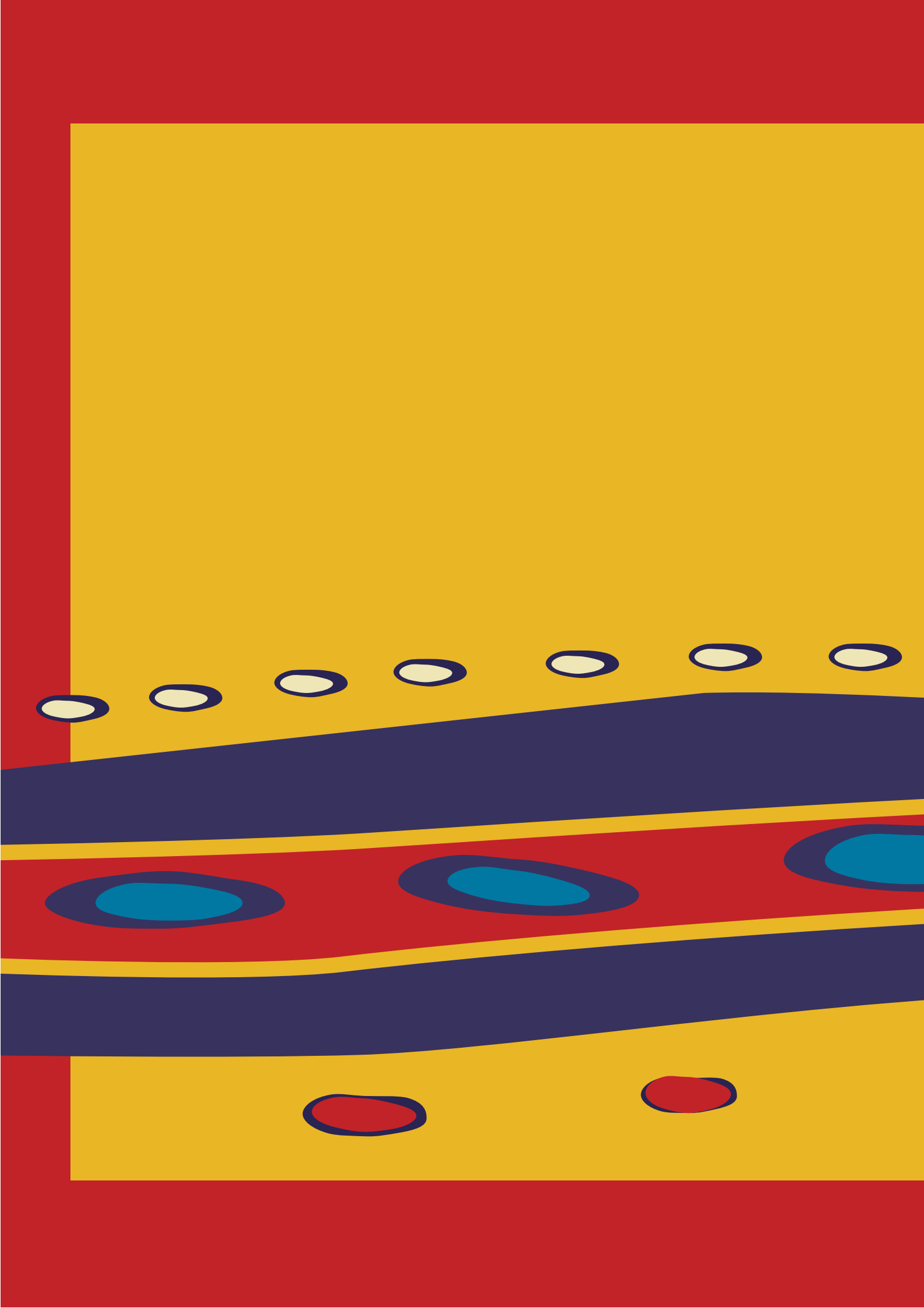
- Sandra Brogden (Catholic Education Office, Broome)
- Anna Sinclair (Aboriginal Independent Community Schools)
- Pam Sherrard (Kununurra District High School)
- Mark Whisson (Karratha Senior High School)
- Camus Smith and Ann Campbell (Gumula Mirnuwarni project)
- Brendan Franzone, Herbert Howell (Wongutha CAPS, Esperance)
- Merv Hammond, Gary Malarkey, Gaye Teede, Melesha Sands, Jackie Fatnowna, Sam Rowlings (Balga SHS)
- Alan Pigram (Broome)
- Wayne Kelly, Mary O'Reeri, Gerard Tonti-Filippini, Sister Dolores (Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay)
- Yangkana Madeleine Laurel, Carolyn Pickett, Sue Thomas, Brad Everson, Chrissie Perks (Wulungarra Community School)
- David Mattin, Allison Woodman, Mick Hayden, Julie Tiller, Leanne Meldrum, Kelly McCormack, Kath Ward (Merredin Senior High School)
- Kym Allsop, Aubrey Nelson (South Merredin Primary School)

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